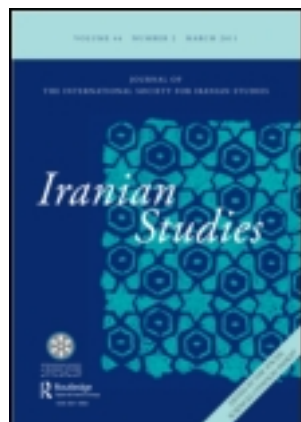


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Reviews

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Reviews

The Struggle for Iran, Christopher de Bellaigue, New York: New York Review of Books, 2007, ISBN 978-1-59017-238-4, 230 pp.

Christopher de Bellaigue is an invaluable observer of contemporary Iran. He is both an outsider looking in, and an insider looking out. An Englishman who studied Persian at Cambridge in the early 1990s, he has spent much of the last decade living and raising a family in Tehran, and, at the same time, writing for the *Economist*, the *New Yorker*, and the *New York Review of Books*. His earlier book, *In the Rose Garden of the Martyrs: A Memoir of Iran* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2004), was a delightful exploration of everyday life in Iran during the Iran–Iraq War, especially public attitudes towards life and death, resistance and defiance, youth and age, the sacred and the profane, wealth and modesty, consumerism and aestheticism, and, of course, the omnipresent form of social politeness known as *tar’aruf*. Free of Orientalism and Western condescendence, de Bellaigue manages to depict important features of popular culture—what professional historians now term *mentalités*.

His new book, *The Struggle for Iran*, is a follow-up collection on the meteoric rise and the equally meteoric demise of the reform movement. Published originally in the *New York Review of Books*, these articles try to explain to readers who are generally well educated but on the whole ignorant of Iran the complexities of that country’s internal politics. These readers were obviously perplexed as

to how a vibrant reform movement could emerge in a society often depicted in the Western press as “atavistic,” “medieval,” “retrogressive,” and, of course, “fundamentalist.”

The articles begin with the moment of enthusiasm—the “springtime of youthful reform” when “almost anything was possible.” They continue with the reformers riding the wave of popular enthusiasm to win unprecedented electoral victories for the presidency and parliament. These were unprecedented in terms both of popular participation and of landslide victories. The liberals followed up their victories with some one hundred reform bills trying to curtail the powers of the Guardian Council, ban outright all forms of physical coercion, protect the press from the conservative judiciary, give defendants access to lawyers and jury trials, and, most controversial of all, implicitly contradict the conventional interpretations of the *shari’a*. They proposed to eliminate in the judicial process distinctions between men and women, between Muslims and non-Muslims, especially in accepting witnesses and awarding monetary compensation. They even ratified the UN Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women—a document too egalitarian even for the US Congress. The articles end with the bursting of the reform bubble and the concomitant rise of Ahmadinejad and the neo-conservatives, calling themselves the “principalists.” “Iranians,” de Bellaigue writes, “were young when I visited back in 1999. Now they are old again, and resigned. For the outsider, that has its own charm, for disappointed Iranians make witty, lyrical company. Ultimately, though, there is a regret in the heart of Iran, and a rarely acknowledged need for friends, of which I hope can always consider myself one.”

The central question de Bellaigue poses for himself through these articles is “what accounts for the failure of the reform movement?” Without resorting to a sledgehammer to crack a small nut, he offers a number of general answers. Needless to say, he makes these offers in an elegant and low-key manner without political bombast and polemical flourish. His first and “simplest explanation” is that the reform “giants,” headed by Khatami and Soroush, proved in the end to be mere “pygmies.” “It’s hard,” he argues, “to find much honor in the defeat of these people—much easier, in fact, to discern the same strain of indifference, even contempt that you find being shown by the elite for the rabble through much of Iran’s history. They retreat without explanation, without apology. They announce speaking engagements—literally, in the case of Soroush—that they don’t honor. And that’s the story of the reform movement: an engagement that dozens of men and few women made, and then did not honor.” Some would counter that this is unduly unfair since it overlooks the physical terror the conservative forces were prepared to unleash. In other parts of the book, de Bellaigue is quite prepared to admit these dangers.

His second explanation lies less in the elite than in the masses. “The answer,” he writes, “lies buried in a political culture where people have never quite made the leap from being subjects to being citizens . . . When I first visited Iran, political discussion among normal Iranians was so intense that I assumed people’s

engagement must be very deep. Then, gradually, as reform died, these people depoliticized themselves. They accommodated themselves to the new circumstances so deftly that I almost forgot how political they had once seemed. They went off politics, stopped talking about it, got on with their lives.” He later adds: “I recall the public enthusiasm that surrounded Khatami in 1999, the year that I first visited Iran. It has been replaced by apathy and cynicism.” In later sections, he adds narcotics, private parties, and flights into the realm of Sufi mysticism. Again some would counter that this is unfair since people can act as citizens only if they live in an open society and those in power are willing to tolerate civil society. As de Bellaigue himself vividly shows, the conservative establishment had no desire to tolerate such a society. The onus clearly lies not on the reformers but on the conservatives.

His third explanation, scattered throughout the book, is the omnipotent and omnipresent power of the conservative clergy within the Islamic Republic—not just at the very heights of the state headed by the Leader, Guardian Council, Supreme Judge, Assembly of Experts, Intelligence Services, and the Revolutionary Guards, but also on the less official levels such as the large foundations, wealthy endowments, ever expanding seminaries, regional Imam Jum’ehs, and, of course, judicial courts so effective in closing down reform newspapers and journals, incarcerating and driving into exile their editors and journalists, and even threatening execution for intellectuals who questioned the morality of capital punishment. One could argue that the most important reason the reformers failed was that they found themselves imprisoned within the straightjacket of the Islamic Republic—a convoluted constitution designed by Khomeini precisely to strengthen theocracy versus democracy, *vox dei* versus *vox populi*, clerical authority versus popular sovereignty, and divine rights of the ulama versus natural rights of human beings. The irony of the whole reform movement lies in the embarrassing fact that all its leaders, including Khatami and Soroush, had been enthusiastic supporters of Khomeini’s concept of *velayat-e faqeh*. In blunt terms, they had helped tailor their own straightjacket. As self-absorbed and self-righteous politicians, they are blind to the irony. De Bellaigue, more interested in the contemporary scene than in the origins of this tragic farce, misses the irony.

His last but not least important explanation is the Bush administration, especially the infamous Axis of Evil speech. de Bellaigue admits,

The US president, did not cause Iran’s reform movement to fail. It was flawed by the timidity of its leaders and their followers. But is no coincidence that the movement went into terminal decline immediately after Bush included Iran in his 2002 “axis of evil.” That speech, and the subsequent invasion of Iraq, convinced Iran’s clerical leaders that Bush was determined to try to topple the Islamic Republic. One of the ways they reacted was by intensifying their assault on the liberalizing, reformist Iranians. The hard-line establishment depicted all democracy advocates as traitors: they were discredited, tortured,

or jailed. Iran's pro-democracy movement could not survive in the atmosphere of protracted crises that Bush helped create.

In writing a succinct autopsy—some would say an overly polite obituary—of the reform movement, de Bellaigue provides readers with incisive insights into a number of other topics—modern Iranian films, exhibition of ancient Persia at the British Museum, and, relevant to the last topic, debunks the image increasing prevalent in America that Iran harbors the grand illusion of recreating the ancient Persian Empire and is incessantly planning and scheming to expand its imperial borders. Anyone interested in contemporary Iran could well read de Bellaigue both for enjoyment and enlightenment.

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Hafez, 'Erfan and Music: As Interpreted by Ostad Morteza Varzi,
Margaret L. Caton, Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2008, ISBN 978-1-56859-248-0, viii+261 pp.

Hafez, 'Erfan and Music is the result of the author's study and experience with *ostâd* Morteza Varzi (1922–2004), a noted *kamânche* player and teacher of classical Persian music. Based primarily on Varzi's personal understandings, which he shared with the author over several years, the book aims to be an introduction to certain concepts in the *ghazals* of the towering figure of Hafez, as well as provide some basic information on the role of music and poetry in mystical way-faring and spiritual development.

The book is "intended as an example of the mystical and cultural meaning behind much of the Persian musical and poetic tradition" (viii). To accomplish this goal, the major parts of the book (chapters 5–12) comprise a "collection and commentary of selected ghazals composed by Hafez . . . chosen as examples of different philosophical themes as well as their applicability for Persian music" (21). The book is arranged in twelve chapters with references and an index; and although the book is addressed to an English-speaking audience, there is an appendix of 55 *ghazals* of Hafez in the original language that provides a useful reference for those knowledgeable in Persian.

Chapter one is a brief introduction to Varzi the musician and his mystical orientation to music and life, which is summarized in "the three-fold concept of *pendâr-e nik*, *goftâr-e nik*, and *kerdâr-e nik* that comes from Zoroastrianism; that your thoughts, words, and actions should be good, and at one with each other" (6).

The most outstanding part of the book is chapter two, where Varzi extends this three-fold concept into music by identifying "*pendâr* in music as a musician's

accumulated knowledge of music, his [or her] performance as *goftâr*, and his [or her] virtues as a pure human being as *kerdâr*” (7). In this chapter, the author beautifully blends her sophisticated understanding of Persian classical music to that of *ostad* Varzi’s conveying a desperately needed appreciation in today’s contemporary world within and without the academy for music’s power and purpose in life—that is, to encourage spiritual growth and the development of divine attributes, to draw one nearer to God, to transcend the material world, and to facilitate health and healing. This is done through broad strokes and some details of the philosophical underpinnings of the compendium of classical Persian music known as the *radif*. Additionally, the *dastgah* modal system and related melodies or pieces called *gushe* (pl. *gushe-hâ*), which form the major part of the *radif*, are discussed in further detail providing valuable information and a solid introduction for the non-specialist. If one is seeking more details regarding the sonic expression of this music, *Traditional Persian Art Music: The Radif of Mirza Abdollah* (1998), by Dariush Tala’i, which includes five compact discs, should be consulted.

Other topics surveyed in chapter two include performance contexts, nature, the concept of *bâl* in mysticism and music, stages of listening to music that relate to *bâl*, and a three-stage process of transformation that can be experienced through music and poetry—this is explored mainly through the concept of *khâm*, *pokhte*, and *sukhte* (raw, cooked, and burnt respectively); other common three-part symbols in Persian poetry that convey transformation are also presented. Most important is the beginning and ending of the process with the concept of love, namely the transformation of human love to divine love, which is all-embracing and transcendent to any potentially limiting social constructs.

Chapter three, “Concepts in the Ghazals of Hafez,” and four, “Seven Stages in the Perfection of ‘*Erfân*,” set the stage for chapters 5–12, which comprise the major portion of the book and where specific *ghazals* of Hafez are presented in translation and interpreted. While chapter three also provides some important basic material, it is unfortunately unbalanced in its interpretation and representation of terms and concepts related to wine and drinking, including *mey*, *sharâb*, *kharâbât*, *mevkhâne*, *sâqi*, and *rend*, among others, which are then further elaborated on throughout the book. These and other terms that Hafez intentionally employs for their metaphoric depth can be misinterpreted if one is accustomed to a particular school of thought on the subject.¹ The problem of misinterpretation is further compounded when such meaning is *re-presented* to others as fact and with a sense of authority (i.e. *ipse dixit* methodological problem), rather than being more appropriately presented as one’s personal views, understandings, or interpretations.

While the book correctly acknowledges that “Hafez uses the metaphors of love and wine to convey spiritual messages” (39), there are unfortunately interpretive

¹Ehsan Yarshater, “HAFEZ (HÂâfez), Šams-al-Din Moḥammad, of Shirazi. An Overview,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*: available at: <http://www.iranica.com>, 2003.

statements that equivocate on the wine of spirituality and the alcoholic drink, claiming that Hafez, Mowlânâ, and Khayyam not only promoted the drinking of wine and drunkenness, but that they also drank wine. For instance: “Hafez and Mowlavi were very open about the subject of the religious legality of wine and music. They believed God has given these to us to enjoy” (39); “He [Hafez] has joined the *rends*, who drink freely and openly” (142); “He [Hafez] admonishes us to keep up with it, don’t fall behind, get moving and drink wine now, not later” (184); “For Hafez, wine is his faith, not what pious men consider to be right . . . Drink while you can, it is the right thing to do, it will speed up the spiritual process” (185).

These and numerous other statements in the text beg the question “Since one cannot ask Hafez directly, and since there is no *historical* record or document to unquestionably support the notion that Hafez drank wine and promoted drunkenness, by what scholarly process and reasoning can one so strongly conclude that one’s personal notion is fact?” The problem is three-fold. First, falling into the methodological pothole of ascribing meaning to and deriving conclusions about poets themselves—what they thought, believed, and how they lived and behaved—solely based on their poetry, especially those of the classical period of Persian mystical poetry is insufficient. Second, since that period of Persian poetry is inextricably interwoven with religion, the distinction between authoritative and infallible interpretation guided by an explicit covenant on the one hand, and personal opinion, understanding, or interpretation on the other must be observed. Third, concluding that Hafez drank wine and promoted drunkenness because this has become an accepted notion to some, or “appealing to an authority figure in support of an argument” commits the methodological error of *ipse dixit*.² In addition, these three points are inter-related. With respect to Hafez himself, the book rightly states “Not much is known about his personal life.”³ Indeed, there is no historical record, other than his poetry, by which one can claim, let alone conclude or prove that Hafez in reality drank wine or behaved in ways often associated with poets from that period. Undoubtedly, “wine” is also used to refer to the intoxicating beverage—his poetry is relentless in exposing the hypocrisy of the so-called pious mystics or clergy who in reality did not practice what they preached, for instance drinking wine behind closed doors or even being drunk in public.⁴ Nevertheless, since it is an axiomatic truth that poetry conveys more than its ostensible meaning, the drinking of wine and drunkenness in the poetry of Hafez cannot be casually attributed to the person of Hafez even if the poet states: “I am drunk.” Consider, if one were to posit such a claim, a critical approach, which must include as source material, more

²David Huron, “Sixty Methodological Potholes,” available at <http://csm1.som.ohio-state.edu/Music829C/methodological.potholes.html>, 2001.

³Baha’-al-Din Khorramshahi and EIr, “HAFEZ (HÂâfez), Šams-al-Din Moḥammad, of Shiraz ii. Hafez’s Life and Times,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*: available at <http://www.iranica.com>, 2003.

⁴Yarshater, “HAFEZ.”

than the poetry itself, as well as more than what others have speculated on or interpreted therefrom must, in the final analysis, lead any fair-minded inquirer to conclude that it is impossible to make such a statement with any certainty since there is no record on which to base the claim. Indeed, this is one of the central problems that the historian must confront head on.

Commenting on the stark contrast of interpretations of Hafez, Arthur Guy writes:

Great is the divergence between the purest mysticism with its symbols, predicated on a transcendental solution to the problem of existence, which some find there—and the cynical Epicureanism strongly tainted with pessimism, which others do not hesitate to take literally in his verses. Is Hafiz the poet of sensual love—of woman, wine, nature, unbelief? Or rather of Divine Love, of the joys of contemplation, of self-surrender, and a purified faith?⁵

The importance for clarity on this point is buttressed by an appreciation for the profound role that poetry plays in the education of children in the Persian-speaking world. In this regard, the following statement is especially relevant:

In poetry as a whole wine is taken to have a different connotation than the ordinary intoxicating liquid. We see it thus used by the Persian Poets such as Sa'dí and Umar Khayám and Háfiz to mean that element which nears man to his divine beloved, which makes him forget his material self so as better to seek his spiritual desires. It is very necessary to tell the children what this wine means so that they may not confuse it with the ordinary wine.⁶

Further along this line of thinking, care must be taken in representing to and interpreting for readers who are unfamiliar with the differing perspectives regarding the topic of wine and related issues in Persian mystical poetry. Moreover, among those who are new readers of Hafez, or for those who have not yet developed the analytical skills for research and scholarship, and who can be easily influenced by the appeals implied by the problem of *ipse dixit*, they might be further led into creating some kind of a “pop culture” image of the poet, who, fed up with the hypocrisy of the world finds freedom in wine, drunkenness, and worldly desires—an unfortunate and unsubstantiated claim.

Consider the interpretation of the *ghazal* (# 65 in the *Divan*) that begins *kboshtar ze 'eysh o sobbat o bâgh o bahâr cheest*. The book interprets this poem “somewhat along the lines of Khayyam’s ‘Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you may die’” (72). While such an interpretation is common among some, might an alternative be equally tenable? Perhaps Hafez is calling the so-called pious

⁵Quoted in Marzieh Gail, *Dawn over Mount Hira and Other Essays* (Oxford, 1976), 33.

⁶Shoghi Effendi, *The Light of Divine Guidance* (Hofheim: Bahá'í Publishing Trust of Germany (Bahá'í-Verlag), 1985), 2: 9.

men and clergy to sincerity since they were breaking the laws they admonished others to observe. Hafez might be calling them to a higher ethical reality, to be sincere and rethink their views—that if they truly believe they will be given wine to drink in the afterlife, yet God forbids it here, why not drink it now since these notions are incompatible. Perhaps the poet's intent is first to question those that have promoted the notion that there is physical wine in the afterlife, then to address the fallacy of an argument based on an invalid premise, and further to renew the truth that was misrepresented by the clergy, which here would mean to avoid drinking and drunkenness. Even if this or another interpretation is plausible, we certainly cannot jump from the tender soil of *personal interpretation* to the solid ground of *absolute conclusion* saying that Hafez condones drinking, nor is there any basis by which to say that since Hafez addressed the hypocrisy of the clergy and pious of his time, that he himself decided to drink.

Another key point to consider is how the book links wine to music and both to transformation and potential healing. Here we can see how powerfully the metaphoric wine of mystical experience is akin to music and how both can facilitate transformation from illness and disease to health and healing.⁷ On the other hand, we cannot say the same about the alcoholic beverage of wine when the overwhelming, indeed staggering scientific evidence directly and unequivocally links wine with multiple forms of cancer and a host of other diseases and conditions—recent searches (January 2009) on the National Institutes of Health online library of medical research (<http://www.pubmed.gov>), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov>), and the World Health Organization (<http://www.who.int/en/>) of the terms “wine” and “cancer” or “alcohol” and “cancer” revealed thousands of research articles on this topic. Expanding the search to other diseases and conditions lends further support.

A secondary issue related to health and healing is the concept of *bâl*. The book accurately describes *bâl* as a specialized or altered state of being that is spiritual in nature, and which is central to experiencing the music of the *radif*. It should be added that *bâl* also relates to multiple aspects of health—it is a multivalent term that can express a state of health or wellness in any dimension of a human's *being*, including the biological, psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual; it can also speak to a holistic conceptualization where these five dimensions are viewed as aspects of one whole.

At the end of most of the poems translated and interpreted in the book, a few lines are given where a particular *dastgâh* is recommended for its performance. Here, more detailed information would be most welcome for the beginner and accomplished musician alike, as well as lovers of Persian classical music and poetry, to gain further insight into Varzi's approach and underlying inspiration and reasoning for choosing certain modes. Additionally, in those sections of the

⁷Benjamin D. Koen, *Beyond the Roof of the World: Music, Prayer, and Healing in the Pamir Mountains* (New York, 2009); Benjamin D. Koen, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Medical Ethnomusicology* (New York, 2008).

book that offer valuable but limited information on the sonic, structural, improvisatory, emotional, psychological, and spiritual aspects of the music, much could be gained from allowing the reader to enter the conversations that led to this book by providing brief but detailed content from ethnographic interviews.

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Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Next Great Crisis in the Middle East, Ali M. Ansari, New York: Basic Books, 2006, ISBN 978-0-465-00350-1, viii+280 pp.

Ali Ansari, the University of St. Andrews professor of modern Iranian history, and the author of *Iran, Islam and Democracy* (2007) and *Modern Iran Since 1921* (2003), has written a timely book introducing Iran's complex and ambiguous relationship with the United States. Those who are not familiar with the history and the political intricacies of Iranian politics and society will benefit considerably; and those knowledgeable in the field of Iranian studies will find it refreshing and informative. Ansari asserts that the West's constant demonizing of Iran obfuscated the real story of Iran and has created a monstrous myth in the current literature. *Confronting Iran*, in contrast, sets the record straight and provides the reader with a general background of Iran's troubled past, and reasons for its mistrust of the West, mainly the United States, and to a lesser extent Great Britain.

The author narrates a short history of the nineteenth-century Qajar dynasty and its political encounters with Russia and Great Britain, followed by a detailed chapter on the 1953 American-backed CIA-implemented coup d'état. This historically significant event overthrew the elected government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq and brought Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi back from exile and placed him on the Persian throne, once again. By narrating the story behind the growth of Iranian displeasure over US foreign policy, Ansari effectively sets the stage for what transpired in Iran's history leading up to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. An in-depth look at the lengthy Iran–Iraq War (1980–88); President Mohammad Khatami's failed attempt at healing the wounds of the past involving the United States, including the 1979–80 hostage crisis; Iranian–American relations after the tragic events of 11 September 2001; George W. Bush's administration; and, finally, the current nuclear development issue are all topics that Ansari discusses throughout the book. Not only does the author recount Iran, the US and Great Britain's overt and covert actions, but also discusses these events through his primary source analyses by providing the reader with more general historical and intellectual concepts such as nationalism, modernization, regional Persian–Arab rivalries,

along with the importance of Iran as a regional “linchpin” (3). What makes *Confronting Iran* unique is the author’s unparalleled access to Iranian, British, and American government officials who have spoken with him on the condition of anonymity. The author’s intent is “to understand, deconstruct, and explain” the process by which American media depicted Iran (5).

Whereas the British dealt with Iran mostly while the Qajar dynasty was in a steep decline, the United States currently faces an Iran that is a reemerging modern “regional power” that has successfully managed to integrate itself in the international community (3). The author uses Iran’s past political relationship with the United States as his basis for presenting his argument that, unless both Iran and the United States each make a concerted effort to understand each other’s complex history, a major crisis is inevitable (238).

I believe the book leaps beyond its explicit purpose and it masterfully provides nuances that will provoke an intellectual discourse on Iran’s existence as one of the oldest nations of the Middle East with potential that, according to some of the discussion presented, have concerned the West. For example, the Shah’s condescending remarks about the industrialized countries’ wasteful addiction to oil in the aftermath of the 1973 Arab–Israeli War and the announcement of his decision to raise the price of petroleum four-fold is one poignant instance that the imperial arrogance makes itself known (61). Albeit some of the economic decisions of the Shah might have seemed mismanaged and out of order at the time, the sheer fact that Iran had the potential to play as one of the power brokers in the world as an energy provider that could deeply affect the global economy, speaks volumes in support of Ansari’s argument.

Ansari discusses the other noteworthy issue that, when faced with the threat of a regime change and the establishment of an Islamic government in 1979, the British and the Americans were in reality not concerned about the “Islamic” nature of this extraordinary event, or the future of human rights and democracy in Iran affected by it, but rather it was their threatened “commercial and military investment[s]” which they worried about and desperately tried to salvage (80). Along the same lines, the Israelis viewed with disbelief, Ansari asserts, the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty and blamed Washington for moving too slowly to save the day (80–81). This point is directly linked, in Ansari’s discussion, with the Israelis’ inherent mistrust of the United States such that at the end even ‘Israel [could] not ... depend on Washington’ (81) when its safety and security was in danger. In other words, no American ally can depend on the United States when it comes to regime protection.

A large body of mythical understandings of each other, Ansari believes, has led to the weakening prospects of a positive relationship between the two states. United States and Iran have both lost many opportunities to improve their relations. One of these instances, Ansari thinks, was during the two-term presidency of Mohammad Khatami. By sharing common interests, such as stability in the Middle East, Khatami, according to Ansari, believed that the inherent nature of both countries being “religious” democracies (156) provided an incredible

platform from which the two parties could carefully launch and plan their future relationship. Furthermore, Khatami's initiation and recommendation for a time of 'Dialogue of Civilizations' in face of the war hawks' thesis of 'Clash of Civilizations' was a golden opportunity that could have changed the whole course of political events between the United States and Iran, and perhaps even the whole of the Middle East (162–163).

Ansari believes that there have been situations where the stick with which the Americans are beating Iran (for example, Iran's support for Hizbollah in Lebanon), is the direct product of anti-Iranian actions such as the American's naïve and ill-advised support and encouragement of Saddam Hussein in his war efforts against Iran in the 1980s (104–105). On the same token, like other historians, he asserts that the advent of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 was a direct effect of the 1953 American coup. US–Iranian relations, Ansari states, started on a positive note after World War I when Iran looked forward to the moral and ethical America becoming its friend and ally and was ready to enter into a new-era void of the high-handed tactics of the Russian and British imperialists. The Iranians were, however, disappointed later when they realized that the Americans only replaced their Western predecessors in their quest to dominate Iran, which ultimately culminated in the overthrow of the Mosaddeq government (234).

Nowadays, one can seldom find an Iranian specialist working in the American or British diplomatic corps, the author claims. The surplus of unemployed Sovietologists has filled this gap with deplorable results. This deliberate ignorance, Ansari asserts, has not only hurt American relations with the Iranians, but also created a mythical history of Iran. Iran, according to the author, has always refused "to be ignored," simply because it enjoys a geopolitical positioning that is sensitive, plus its vast petroleum and natural gas reserve prompts it to become a major player in the region. The West has willfully ignored Iran because it is a complicated state to understand and only specialists with a deep understanding and knowledge of Iran appreciate its potential as a natural American "ally in the region" (2–3).

It is interesting to point that every American president since Jimmy Carter (1976–80) has failed to deal with Iran decidedly. This, according to Ansari, suggests that the issue has been either too complicated, or that the West has been unable to come to terms with a formidable Iranian power in the Middle East. The United States has "leapt from [a] containment" policy to an all-out confrontation mode, and the same country that has been ignored for the past twenty-seven years is suddenly not only *a* problem but "*the* problem" (3). The "post-modern age" argument stating that "the absence of evidence [is] not the evidence of absence," which the American secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld put forward when discussing Iraq's 2003 invasion, according to Ansari, is testament to a new age of militaristic diplomacy that seems to be the new way in dealing with people whom the United States does not agree with, or, understand (238). Ansari argues that the current US administration is ideologically driven

and real facts do not seem to play a pivotal role in its politics (240). Rather than dealing with Iran as a reality, some have debated and agreed on its destruction by fragmenting it; however, Ansari asserts that Iran “transcends ethnicities” because it is defined by “a cultural cohesion.”

Although the book is amply supplied with supplementary information, such as a chronology and key term section, a non-specialist would have appreciated the book more if a geopolitical map and illustrations were provided. Aside from this, one could wish for a more thorough editing process in eliminating the occasional misspellings and grammatical errors. All the same, Professor Ansari successfully presents his thesis. *Confronting Iran* is unique in its approach and analysis and is a great addition to the list of related works such as Mark Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne’s *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, and Nikki Keddie’s updated edition of *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*.

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The Shah and the Ayatollah: Iranian Mythology and Islamic Revolution, Fereydoun Hoveyda, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003, ISBN 0275978583, ix+125 pp.

In this intriguing little book, the late Fereydoun Hoveyda, former Iranian ambassador to the United Nations and brother of the ill fated prime minister, Amir Abbas Hoveyda, explores aspects of the political mythology of Iran which he tentatively raised in his study *The Fall of the Shah* (1980). A French-educated man of letters with a strong appreciation of the literary, it was in many ways a natural extension of his interests to broach the relationship between Iranian mythology and political culture, and it was very much to his credit that he first raised these issues at a time when the political situation was most unpropitious. Hoveyda’s suggestion, in his *The Fall of the Shah*, that the mythological cycle of filicide, as exemplified by the story of Rostam and Sohrab, mirrored the reality of political life in Iran, was as tantalizing as it was brief. Hoveyda had argued that the story personalized and reflected a sickness in Iranian political culture which tended to inhibit progress and innovation in favor of that which was conservative, aged and historic. Hoveyda’s initial foray was sufficiently pithy to whet the appetite without providing enough material for a critique and there was both anticipation and expectation that this theme would be further explored and expanded in the book under review.

In this book he takes the analogy further but also explores wider mythological connections, in particular the mythology of Jamshid and his eventual overthrow by the demon king Zahhak, on account of the former’s conceit. Hoveyda draws a direct correlation between the tale of Jamshid, the just king whose fall was

precipitated by monumental hubris, and the fate of Mohammad Reza Shah. The extension of this argument about the nature of the Islamic Republic of Iran is nonetheless implied rather than fully extrapolated, perhaps because the implications are extremely controversial. Instead, Hoveyda chooses to replay the cycle, but this time with Ayatollah Khomeini in the role of the Jamshid. While such discretion is understandable, it does reflect an unfortunate tendency in the book, unsurprising given its brevity, to pull its punches and to provide opinion rather than analysis. As interesting as this may be, it can never fully satisfy the inquiring mind.

This is all the more frustrating because Hoveyda appears not to have taken any notice of the changes and developments in Iranian historical and literary discussion. What may have been an innovative and highly prescient approach in 1980—few would have been bold enough to argue that Iranian as opposed to Islamic mythologies played any significant role in the political culture of Iran—comes across as dangerously out of touch in 2003. Ironically, this is not because Iranians have discarded these myths, but on the contrary because they have re-appropriated them with an enthusiasm which many observers outside Iran, including Hoveyda, do not appear to have noticed. While the *Shahnameh* was initially dismissed by Ayatollah Khomeini, its rehabilitation within the intellectual oeuvre of the Islamic Republic was confirmed by President Khatami in 1998 when he announced that “the ethical myth and the myth epic indicate the spirit of Iranians . . . the Book of Kings [is] the symbol of Iran.”⁸ Khatami was of course reflecting intellectual developments as well as promoting them. Vigorous discussions on the merits and interpretations of Iranian myths, in particular the role of Zahhak, had been going on for the better part of a decade, most obviously after Ahmad Shamlu’s provocative reinterpretation of the myth and its political implications.⁹ Since then, discussion about the importance and fundamental relevance of Iranian mythology to the political culture and, as some have argued, to Iran’s political independence, has grown dramatically.¹⁰ Even such revolutionary purists as the current president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad are not averse to expounding on the “heroic” past to excite and agitate the popular (nationalist) mood in Iran. Similarly, statues of mythological heroes have emerged to adorn various cities, more often than not paid for by public subscription. Arash the Archer for example now stands proudly in Borujerd, while Iran’s most famous mythological revolutionary, Kaveh the Blacksmith, now graces Isfahan (much to the chagrin of Ayatollah Jannati).

⁸President Khatami addresses Iranian Expatriates in USA, BBC SWB ME/3339 MED/1, dated 23 September 1998, New York 20 September 1998.

⁹Ahmad Shamlu’s lecture ‘Haqiqat cheqadr aseeb pazir ast’ (The truth is so vulnerable to distortion) was reprinted, along with rebuttals, in the popular intellectual magazine *Adineh*, 47 (1990): 6–11.

¹⁰See in particular the introduction to H. Hosseinzadeh, *Zahak: az ostoreh ta vaqe’iyat* (Zahak: From Myth to Reality) (Tehran, 2005).

These developments, socially generated and echoed by Iran's political leadership, reflect a sea-change in popular attitudes which do not simply entail a return to pre-revolutionary values. In many ways it represents a social yearning for a 'mytho-historical' anchor which far pre-dates the trauma of the modern era. Much of this has yet to be recognized, let alone rigorously analyzed. Unfortunately, Hoveyda offers his readers little more than a taster, a suggestive introduction with little of the substance one might have come to expect from such an intellect. There is opinion, sometimes interesting, at other times stretching the limits of plausibility. More critically, Hoveyda failed to engage with developments within Iran. This is a pity, because had he looked, he would have found much to make him smile.

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Iran in the Twenty-first Century: Politics, Economics, and Conflict, edited by Homa Katouzian and Hossein Shahidi, London and New York: Routledge, 2008, ISBN 978-0-415-43558-1, 300 pp.

Iran in the Twenty-first Century collects the papers presented at an international conference held at Wadham College (Oxford University) in April 2004; two articles—by Trita Parsi and Homa Katouzian—were added. Fourteen articles, a short preface, a long introduction, a useful index and extensive footnotes turn this book into a standard text for academic researchers.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the study of Iran's domestic sphere and foreign affairs is being conducted by "leading sociologists—Azadeh Kian-Thiébaud, Ahmad Sadri, Mahmoud Sadr, social anthropologists—Touraj Atabaki, Hossein Shahidi, political scientists—Hamid Ahmadi, Ali M. Ansari, Farideh Farhi, Homa Katouzian, Saideh Lotfian, Trita Parsi, and economists—Mehdi Askarieh, Hassan Hakimian, Ahmad R. Jalali-Naini, Massoud Karshenas, Djavad Salehi-Isfahani—in the field of Iranian studies." All articles in the book are devoted to contemporary Iran and, more specifically, to its economic problems (four articles), including the use of oil revenues, privatization, corruption, to socio-economic problems (three articles) such as women's rights, youth culture, employment, and the gap between rich and poor, and to political and foreign policy problems (eight articles), including human rights, national identity, democracy, and ethnic minorities. Although the topics differ, they are connected and convey the idea of the break between the Pahlavi and the Islamic regimes.

Economists Massoud Karshenas and Hassan Hakimian dedicate their article "Managing Oil Resources and Economic Diversification in Iran" (194–216) to oil, economy and democracy. They emphasize the need for an alternative

economic policy and reforms. Comparing Iran's economic decision-making with the economic policy of Malaysia and China, they observe an increasing dependence on oil, that is, insufficient economic diversification beyond the oil sector, and call for decentralized or regional oil option. Ahmad R. Jalali Naini's article "Capital Accumulation, Financial Market Reform and Growth in Iran: Past Experience and Future Prospects" (217–242) is less specific than the preceding one. He raises a variety of questions, including capital accumulation, the growth of the population of working age (51 million in 2010 for a total population estimated at c. 75.9 million), the rise of the female labor force and the great number of unemployed in Iran. He bases his arguments on both on macro- and micro-economic studies. Showing the significance of oil revenues for Iran's fiscal system, he makes seven recommendations for future job creation.

Unlike these two articles, which included heavy use of graphs, tables, and numbers, Homa Katouzian used his article, "The Significance of Economic History, and the Fundamental Features of the Economic History of Iran" (273–290) to draw on his numerous works about economists from Adam Smith to Karl Marx, in order to show the specificity of Iran's economic history. He compares the historically short-term development of Iranian society to the longer-term historical cycles of modernizing European societies, and denounces oil-driven, autocratic 1960s and 1970s as "pseudo-modernism." He also suggests that certain requirements for development—acquisition, innovation, accumulation and preservation—will mean that, in the long term, Iran has to create a model different from the European model.

The articles devoted to Iran's social problems have been written by Mahmoud Sadri and Ahmad Sadri, "Three Faces of Dissent: Cognitive, Expressive and Traditionalist Discourses of Discontent in Contemporary Iran" (63–85) and by Azadeh Kian-Thiébaud. The former classify the groups who express dissent; they also enumerate the newspapers and magazines whose pages are opened to dissent and which do not ignore the graffiti wars as an expressive discourse of dissent. Their interpretation of the emergence of charismatic heterodox cults in sites such as the city of Makareh in the province of Isfahan is instrumental to our understanding of the weight of religiosity in Iran and the link between such religiosity and the Islamic regime.

In her article "From Motherhood to Equal Rights Advocates: The Weakening of Patriarchal Order" (86–106), Kian-Thiébaud interprets interviews she conducted with about a hundred mothers in Tehran and Isfahan. She observes the growing mobilization of Iranian women against gender inequality and patriarchy. The results of her study, financed by several institutions, are accompanied by numerous tables. They allow the author to emphasize the tension between a republican regime which praises gender equality and an Islamic one advocating gender inequality. Her article completes Ahmad R. Jalali-Naini's text on economic growth.

Djavad Salehi-Isfahani's article "Human Resources in Iran: Potentials and Challenges" (243–272) attempts to link the topics of rising productivity and rising

education. He identifies “Iran’s rigid labor markets as the largest obstacle to the development of its human resources and reforming as a principal challenge facing Iran in the new century.” Reforms are independent of the party in power, whether reformist or not. Tables, graphics and population censuses from 1986 to 1996 illustrate how much birth rates have fallen—to under three births/woman. Comparing education, labor market, and economic growth in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries with Iran, he emphasizes the influence of public sector and the rigidity of employment in public and private sectors.

Defending or promoting national interest is a permanent feature of foreign policy. But how was national interest understood before 1979? And how has it been envisioned in the Islamic Republic of Iran? Hamid Ahmadi, Farideh Farhi, and Touraj Atabaki explore several aspects of this question.

In “The Dilemma of National Interest in the Islamic Republic of Iran” (3–40), Ahmadi discusses the foreign political implications of the concept of Iranian/Islamic duality. He observes that ‘national interest’ has been defined in terms of power since the aftermath of World War II. Demonstrating that Dr Mossadegh faced the opposition of Ayatollah Kashani in the early 1950s, he suggests that the dilemma of national interest/interests of the Ummat-e Islami is not new. If this dilemma seemed to wane during the years of the struggle against Mohammad Reza Shah and up to the fall of the Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan, it rose again when Ayatollah Khomeini claimed that the concept “national” conflicted with Islam. In this view, the American hostage crisis was part and parcel of the defense of the Islamic world. The Iran–Iraq War gave way to a more realistic foreign policy: was this policy more efficient than the idealist one? Ahmadi shows that the theory of “national interest” is not anchored in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran and that the fundamental contradiction lies in the structural dualism between the *vali-ye faqih* and the president of the Republic.

In “Crafting a National Identity amidst Contentious Politics in Contemporary Iran” (13–27), Farideh Farhi sees a Manichaean struggle between Iranians of Islamist and secular convictions. She poses questions about the construction of “national identity.” Reading the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, she notes the question of the doctrine of *velayat* and its legitimacy: how to accept that law in the Islamic Republic permits arbitrary clerical rule? Are we Muslims or children of Cyrus or both? Farhi emphasizes the importance of “territorial Iran and the transformation of the national question into ethnic challenge”: Who are we? Who are they?

This is the question that Touraj Atabaki ponders in his article “From Multilingual Empire to Contested Modern State” (41–62). Examining three subjects—centre and periphery, territorial attachment and political borders, ethnic identity and social mobility—he suggests that the territorial diminution of the Iranian Empire in the nineteenth century favored the growth of nationalist sentiment. Pointing to the question of Azerbaijan and to President Khatami’s recognition of Azeri as an expression of ethnic identity, he concludes that individual rights could ensure the existing borders.

The articles by Ali Ansari, Farhad Atai and Trista Parsi are devoted to the theme of bilateral relations between Iran and United States, Iran and the Republics of Central Asia, Iran and Israel, respectively.

In his contribution “Iran and the United States in the Shadow of 9/11: Persia and the Persian Question Revisited” (107–122), Ansari dwells at length on the interruption of diplomatic relations between Iran and the United States and the animosity of the latter to the *axis of evil* as a result of the 1979 hostage crisis. He examines the dialectal nature of US–Iranian relations through their foundational myths and their evolution since the revolution. 9/11 changed US foreign policy from realism to ideology; at the same time, Iran retained its distrust of the US in spite of President Khatami’s idea of dialogue, which Ansari regards as a constructive step.

In his article “A Look to the North. Opportunities and Challenges” (123–135), Atai tackles the question of Iran’s relations with Russia and Central Asia: how will the Central Asian republics handle their oil and gas reserves without any access to open seas? Iran is interested in being involved in the building of oil and gas pipelines from these areas to Europe, and affected by the question of security. Iranian authorities called for the formation of an *Organization of Caspian States (ECO)*; it is not of great import and could not hinder unilateral Turkish (and Russian) interests in the region.

Parsi’s contribution, “Israel–Iran: Power Cycle Competition” (136–157), is based on interviews with Israeli, Iranian, and American officials in 2004. After a brief presentation of the theoretical framework (international relations), he analyzes the relations between Israel and Iran from 1979 to 1991, and then looks at changes introduced by events in the Middle East. He concludes that security problems continue to trouble Israel; at the same time, Iran aspires to a leadership role in the region.

Two articles are devoted to the burning question of Iran’s nuclear policy. In “Nuclear Policy and International Relations” (158–180), Saideh Lotfian examines newspapers and official declarations on nuclear, energetic and environmental subjects. She describes the start of Iran’s nuclear program, aided by US and West German technical assistance (though she neglects to mention French involvement). She also gives information on the pro-nuclear and the anti-nuclear factions. She mentions the British, French and German foreign ministers’ meeting in December 2003 and the agreement signed in November 2004, and points to Iranian disappointment and possible Iranian subordination to Russia.

In “A Case for Sustainable Development of Nuclear Energy and a Brief Account of Iran’s Nuclear Program” (181–193), Mehdi Askarieh widens the debate by examining the issue of energy and sustainable development. He makes a number of interesting remarks on energy cost as well as environmental aspects and impacts of nuclear energy, and considers the burning question of Iran’s stance on the question of non-proliferation.

Although the individual bibliographies are by and large limited to English texts, they are very substantial and interesting. Even if problems of corruption,

parallel circuits, or political lobbies could have been developed at greater depth, this book, an exhaustive source of documents on contemporary Iran, is essential reading and food for thought about Iran at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

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The Baha'is of Iran: Socio-historical Studies, edited by Dominic Parviz Brookshaw and Seena B. Fazel, London and New York: Routledge, 2008, ISBN 0-415-35673-3, 283 pp.

The Baha'is of Iran: Socio-historical Studies brings together a number of high quality essays written by an international group of scholars. One might expect to find this book on a library shelf among many others devoted to the subject of Baha'is in Iran, but as editors Dominic Brookshaw and Seena Fazel state in the introduction, very few volumes have been published on the Iranian Baha'i community, and even fewer have focused on the twentieth century. Indeed, until now, scholarly interest, beginning with the work of the Orientalist E. G. Browne, has mostly focused on the earlier Babi rather than on the Baha'i religion. There are many reasons for this; like the Baha'is themselves, the field of Baha'i studies has experienced a complex and sometimes troubled history. However, with the publication of this volume and several recent monographs, scholars are opening and developing new areas of research and inquiry.

The chapters in this book may be somewhat unevenly yet coherently divided into three broad categories: conversions to Baha'ism, Baha'i contributions to Iranian society at large, and the history of persecution and discrimination against the Baha'is of Iran.

The first two chapters, by Mehrdad Amanat and Fereyduun Vahman, fall under the first category: religious conversions. Here, essays on Jewish and Zoroastrian conversions to the Baha'i religion explain why members of one persecuted minority would want to become part of another persecuted minority. The complex of answers to this question includes, in part, how the Baha'i community, with normative beliefs in equality, regarded new converts, and then how both Jews and Zoroastrians viewed Baha'i claims as fulfilling messianic beliefs of their faiths. Other elements, such as Iranian cultural practices, informed the conversion process, too. Both essays contain references to sometimes rare and unpublished manuscripts. Although the studies are thorough in their treatment of the aforementioned religious communities, the section as a whole would have been more complete if the editors had also included chapters on Christian and Muslim conversions.

The next four essays, by Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, Moojan Momen, Seena B. Fazel and Minou Foadi, and Kavian Milani, address various ways in which Baha'is contributed to Iranian society. The specific themes are diverse and

include analyses on Baha'i women, schools, health care projects, and involvement in the Constitutional Revolution. Most of these topics have received little scholarly attention; these articles thus should be seen as foundational studies that lay the groundwork for future research. For example, we learn that the founder of the Baha'i religion, Baha'ullah, and his son, 'Abdu'l-Baha, wrote numerous letters or "tablets" of diverse content and wide scope to Baha'i women in Iran and India during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Baha'is themselves were active in the spheres of education and health, too; inspired by Baha'i scriptural norms that emphasize the importance of education, they founded numerous schools in Iran. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, these schools were closed down during the Reza Shah period. Similarly, Baha'i scriptural pronouncements regarding the importance of human health led to the promotion of Baha'i health initiatives in Iran. Baha'is built public bathhouses (largely because they were banned from such institutions themselves), hospitals, and outpatient clinics in various Iranian cities, most of which were seized after the Islamic Revolution. Finally, contrary to earlier historiography on the subject, the Baha'i community was neither marginalized nor anti-constitutional during the Constitutional Revolution, although Baha'i disappointment in its outcome informed subsequent Baha'i attitudes towards Iranian politics.

The final and longest section of the volume consists of five chapters devoted to the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran. Essays in this final section, by Eliz Sanasarian, Abbas Amanat, H. E. Chehabi, and Reza Afshari, explore a number of aspects of that persecution, beginning with a study on how dehumanizing language and stereotyping feed oppression. Anti-Baha'i attitudes have a long history in Iran that, as the next chapter discusses, go back to the early Babi period, when cycles of violence repeated themselves throughout the nineteenth century and enjoyed the support of the state, the clergy, and finally the public. As the essays in this section demonstrate, many different groups in Iran opposed the Baha'is. Two chapters deal with twentieth-century secular, anti-clerical opposition to the religion and Islamic anti-Baha'ism respectively. The fact that secularists accused the Baha'is of causing disunity in the nation and being involved in conspiracies indicates that Baha'is have been internally otherized for many Iranians, despite the fact that the Baha'i religion carries within it elements of Iranian culture that Baha'is have taken with them throughout the world. This process of otherization occurred not only in a secular context, but also within the religious sphere, where anti-Baha'i sentiments led to episodes such as the destruction of the dome and appropriation of the National Baha'i Center in Tehran in 1955. The book appropriately ends with an essay devoted to the history of human rights violations against the Baha'is of Iran during the period of the Islamic Republic. During these decades, Baha'is experienced the execution or murder of their leaders and ordinary adherents, the destruction of their cemeteries, the loss of their jobs and property and much more.

This is a very impressive volume. The articles tie in well together and often address similar themes within their broader categories. Some of the essays

need to be situated more firmly within a wider historical context and incorporate relevant theoretical scholarship. The book would have benefited from the chapters being explicitly divided into the general categories mentioned in the introduction. None of this, though, takes away from the overall value of the book, and the editors and authors are to be congratulated on producing such a useful volume.

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Mediaeval Persian Painting: The Evolution of an Artistic Vision,
A. T. Adamova, New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 2008, ISBN 978-1-934283-05-9, 117 pp.

This deceptively-slim volume contains nothing less than a major re-conceptualization of the development of Persian painting and constitutes a capstone to the scholarly career of Dr Ada Adamova, the long-time and widely-admired curator of Persian art at the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, who first presented the texts published here as the 2003 Ehsan Yarshater Lectures on Iranian Art and Archaeology at the University of London. Challenging the primacy traditionally accorded the “book miniature” (i.e., manuscript illustration) and eschewing the usual scheme for the history of Persian painting based on dynastic epochs (Il-Khanid, Jala’irid, Timurid, Safavid, etc.), as well as the thematic model represented by recent books such as Oleg Grabar’s *La peinture persane* (1999) and Eleanor Sims’ *Peerless Images* (2002), Adamova instead defines the critical genres and overlapping stages in the progression of Persian pictorial arts—from wall painting to book painting to album painting—through what she calls “internal characteristics,” including both stylistic and iconographic features. This evolution is laid out in chapters one through three, which all discuss multiple paintings as well as their artistic “schools,” while the fourth and final chapter constitutes a study of a single (albeit multi-part) work of art. In proposing an alternative to the prevailing periodization in the study of Persian painting, Adamova does assign each of her main phases a particular time frame, thus offering what amounts, in the end, to a historical survey and in the process extending the notion of “medieval” well into early modern times.

Adamova’s account begins with the age of monumental painting and draws on both literary sources and the fragments of extant murals of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to explore the format, forms and subjects of wall paintings and to expose the impact of these attributes on other pictorial arts of the early medieval period such as *mina’i* pottery. At the outset, Adamova emphasizes two fundamental points: namely, that paintings on the walls of palaces and more modest

residences comprised the normative art of Iran before the Mongol invasions, and that epic tales, particularly in Firdausi's *Shahnama*, inspired most of the pictorial imagery of the time. Both large-scale painting and epic literature continued to influence the representational arts at the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century, as evidenced especially in manuscripts illustrated in Shiraz. Meanwhile, more-or-less simultaneously in the Il-Khanid capital of Tabriz, a pictorial counter-current, featuring "exotic" Far Eastern modes, was developing in the artistic workshops responsible for the production of Rashid al-Din's *Jami' al-Tawarikh*. Adamova regards this so-called Rashidiyya style, so often called innovative in the scholarly literature, as both un-Iranian and short-lived, however, and quickly returns to the representation of Iran's heroic national past, as reflected in illustrated copies of the *Shahnama* and particularly the volume now known as the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, which she attributes to circa 1328–33 and posits as a reaction to "the destructive influence of the Mongols' cosmopolitan culture" (14). While drawing on and sometimes taking issue with the extensive scholarship on this celebrated work, Adamova offers her own insights into the meaning of certain of its pictorial features (for instance, figures watching from windows as witnesses to the historicity of what the epic illustrations represent) and, through detailed analyses of selected compositions, stresses the manuscript's pervasive monumentality as the pictorial equivalent of the "incandescent passions" of Firdausi's epic poem. Adamova sees much the same monumental conception and boldness in other *Shahnama* manuscripts from Shiraz as well as those done in either Isfahan and Baghdad during the 1330s and concludes that, however distinctive their individual styles, these volumes share the same aesthetic ideal and painting techniques derived from the venerable tradition of wall painting.

It is this monumental vision, as incorporated into the arts of the book during the first decades of the fourteenth century, that laid the ground work for the next stage in Persian painting's development when the book miniature emerged at mid-century as premier within the hierarchy of pictorial forms, a position it would occupy for the next two centuries. This is the subject of Adamova's second chapter, in which she stresses the importance both of epic, romantic and mystical poetry and of the flatness of the manuscript page in the formulation of a new approach to painting, which she eloquently characterizes as "a transition from drama to poetry and from plasticity to two dimensionality" (33), and as "a movement from a real to an imaginary world . . . [that] tears away from its historical basis and strives to look into the essence of things" (37). Once again, the argument rests on and grows out of the detailed description and analysis of various works of art, including manuscripts previously distinguished as either court or commercial production and newly and most aptly here by Adamova as "prestige productions" and "books for reading." A certain amount of the discussion is comparative, contrasting the drama and emotional expression in paintings datable to the second quarter of the fourteenth century (and thus in the monumental mode) with the flattened space, delicate brush

strokes, refined lines and elegant figures typical of compositions created during the century's second half. Adamova devotes greatest attention to the ever-intriguing paintings in the *Masnavis* of Khwaju Kirmani, a manuscript written in Baghdad in 798/1396 (British Library, Add 18113), a date that she, following along Teresa Fitzherbert's seminal study of 1991 and on the basis of her own first-hand examination, believes refers only to the transcription of the text, which actually may have been copied out precisely to accommodate already-existing miniatures painted by 'Abd al-Hayy, the master artist said to have taught painting to Sultan Ahmad Jala'ir, patron of the Khwaju Kirmani volume. Her insightful discussion of these and other contemporary paintings that she attributes to Baghdad, such as the famous scene of "Humay and Humayn in the Garden" (Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris), leads to the conclusion that the end of the fourteenth century witnessed at once a revolution in pictorial aesthetics due to the primacy of poetry and a transformation of illustrations into pictures resulting from the artistic vision of a new world of the imagination "where beauty consists in the depth and delicacy of feelings and experience" (43).

Chapter three, with the somewhat misleading title of "Individual Pictures and the Art of Composing Albums (*muraqqa'*)," concerns developments in fifteenth to mid-sixteenth century manuscript illustration that eventually would lead to the emergence of and growing taste for independent paintings and drawings and their compilation in album form—a point reached, however, only in the chapter's final paragraphs. Meanwhile, Adamova begins this particular stage of Persian painting's evolution with a focus on changes to books made in Shiraz during the early Timurid period, including the introduction of certain decorative devices and patterns that served to harmonize and integrate the relationship of text, illustration and illumination on each manuscript page. Next follows a lengthy discourse on a series of manuscripts illustrated in Herat and Tabriz at various moments during the fifteenth century under Jala'irid, Timurid and Turkman patronage (among them such celebrated works as the c. 1406–10 *Divan* of Sultan Ahmad Jala'ir, the 1430 *Shahnama* made for Prince Baysonghur, the 1467–68 *Zafarnama* with paintings by Bihzad, and the 1481 *Khamasa* of Aqqoyunlu origin), pointing out their paintings' stylistic novelties as well as the aesthetic norms and artistic continuities of their particular schools. From this account Adamova concludes that later fifteenth century painting "already contains those features that were to determine the evolution of painting in the 16th century under the Safavids, which [in turn] lead to a reorganization of hierarchy of forms of painting in favour of paintings on single sheets, independent of the rule and norms of book illustration" (63). In support of this proposition, she briefly touches on examples of notable paintings from the early to mid-sixteenth century (such as the "Court of Gayumars" in the Tahmasp *Shahnama*, the "Feast of 'Id" in the *Divan* of Hafiz, and "Majnun approaching Layla's Camp," in the *Haft Anrang* of Jami made for Sultan Ibrahim Mirza) that, in her opinion, represent the last gasp of "classical" Persian painting, evidenced by their painters' efforts, already manifest in the late fifteenth century, to transcend both the

limits of the manuscript page through the creation of full-page compositions and the narrative dictates of the literary text through the inclusion of many extraneous details and scenes. Additional factors at play in this move away from the traditional norms of book illustration and towards the new genre of the separate miniature include, on the one hand, the absence of any major poetic inspiration following Jami's death in 1491, and, on the other, the growing interest in European art among Persian painters and patrons during the second half of the sixteenth century. Here Adamova notes that the compilation of single page paintings and drawings in Persian albums beginning in the late fifteenth century coincided with similar collecting practices in Europe—an interesting observation that, however, warrants further elaboration or at least documentation. The chapter ends rather summarily, with the reiterated assertion that by the mid-sixteenth century single-page miniatures dominated Persian artistic production and that such works had begun to influence the styles and techniques of manuscript painting as seen, for instance, in a marked increase in the size of figures and a decrease in detailed patterns and chromatic precision. Missing from these concluding remarks, however, are the sensitive descriptions of specific works of art found in chapters one and two.

As if in compensation, the fourth chapter is devoted completely to a detailed discussion of one particular album, known today as the St Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) *Muraqqa'*, containing a variety of Indian and Persian paintings and calligraphies dating from the late sixteenth through eighteenth centuries and long regarded as having been assembled in mid-eighteenth century Iran. The study of Islamic albums and album-production, including their individual contents, overall arrangement and cultural significance, has become an exciting focus of art historical inquiry and public appreciation in recent years, manifest in the circulating exhibition *Muraqqa': Imperial Mughal Albums from the Chester Beatty Library* (2008) with an substantial catalogue by Elaine Wright. By far the most original contribution, particularly for its theoretical perspective, is *The Persian Album, 1400–1600, From Dispersal to Collection* (2005) by David J. Roxburgh. It is a pity that Adamova did not take Roxburgh's stimulating work into account (presumably because it appeared in the interval between the presentation of her Yarshater lectures and their publication) since his notions about the purpose and structure of albums are directly germane to the remarks with which she frames this chapter.

Be that as it may, Adamova has done a admirable job on the St Petersburg *Muraqqa'*. Like many such compilations, this album is no longer intact; while the majority of its folios are in St Petersburg, others were removed before the main acquisition in 1909 by Tsar Nicolas II and now are found in collections worldwide. Building on previous Russian publications (1962 and 1996) and supplementing them with newly-discovered folios and her own codicological and other findings, including a meticulous examination of the border designs, Adamova reconstructs the original order of the *muraqqa'*'s contents and, more significantly, analyzes the iconographic and thematic sequence of its miniatures. As set forth in an appended

listing of 128 folios, the pictorial order consists of “official subjects” (comprising several dozen royal portraits and scenes of royal audiences and hunts), followed by genre compositions (visits to holy men, harem and bathing scenes, European engravings and Mughal versions of same, etc.), and ending with flowers, birds and animal studies. The specificity and sequence of these images, along with the style of both paintings and borders, have allowed Adamova to propose a new and complex history for the *muraqqa*’s protracted production, beginning in India during the reign of Shah Jahan (1627–58) and continuing in Iran sometime after Nadir Shah’s sack of Delhi in 1739.

Adamova’s four chapters retain much of the rhetorical flavor and verbiage of oral presentation. Indeed, the contributions of the distinguished scholar J. M. Rogers, credited on the title page as translator and editor, would seem to have been made to the 2003 lecture texts rather than their publication. It is unfortunate that similar editorial attention was not paid to the published versions, particularly to catch awkward verbal formulations, faulty punctuation, and inconsistent spelling, even of Professor Yarshater’s name. Fortunately, these problems, while distracting, do not detract from the book’s considerable substance. Doubtless the specialists in Persian painting who are its primary audience will not agree with all of Adamova’s analyses and attributions, or follow every turn in her sometimes discursive argument and uneven exposition of ideas, or even accept the notion, as posited in the volume’s subtitle, of one “artistic vision” for Persian painting. Furthermore, they are bound to regret the absence of an overall conclusion to draw together the principal strands of the author’s thesis and of an index to facilitate the finding of the key works of art, schools and so forth she discusses. None will fail to recognize, however, the truly significant and thought-provoking contribution that this book makes to the study of Persian painting and to appreciate anew how much is owed to Ada Adamova as a leading scholar in the field.

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Iran—A People Interrupted, Hamid Dabashi, New York: New Press, 2007, ISBN 1-5955-8059-X, 323 pp.

This book can be evaluated very simply: It is a highly unusual and, more than that, a great book. Everybody interested in Iranian Studies should themselves obliged to read it with great care.

Hamid Dabashi is Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York. Thinking about Iran and its history in the last two centuries leads him straight to the heart of criticism of colonialism, Eurocentrism and Western domination of non-European areas

and regions, amongst them Iran. This is an angry book. Dabashi dislikes the idea that certain Iranian and non-Iranian authors develop scenarios in which they end up “waiting to be liberated by George W. Bush and his Christian Crusaders” (7). Some short quotes from the introduction may be helpful to better understand Dabashi’s motivation in writing this book: “Writing this book on Iran is an act of restitution—of setting the record straight. I have to pick a bone with these people . . . who have distorted the history of my people in order to belittle them and thus destroy their will to resist the regional domination of a predatory empire that these old and new con artists lucratively serve. . . . I am ten times more critical of both the Pahlavi monarchy and the Islamic mullarchy than all of these people together. But to me the story of modern Iran is one of defiance and rebellion against both domestic tyranny and globalized colonialism” (7). And he concludes: “I plan to do all these things while giving you a straight history of Iran as well. I promise you that by the end of this book, you will know more about Iran than the U.S. Department of State, the CIA, the Pentagon, the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies and the Johns Hopkins University, the Hoover Institution, The Heritage Foundation, and five other neocon think tanks—not to mention the Ministry of Islamic Guidance and Islamic Culture in the Islamic Republic in Iran—all put together. I know things they do not know, or do not care to know, or would rather forget, or never learned, or would not tell you.” (11). He keeps his promise.

Dabashi takes a strong and very expressive, sometimes even aggressive stance towards the people he criticizes. This is, at any rate, Dabashi’s line of argument and of his painstakingly detailed interpretation of Iran’s modern history. My point here is not to discuss every single statement and every theoretical and, not infrequently, polemical point. What Dabashi offers is a unique presentation of Iran’s culture and history that includes daring definitions of these two terms. “My principal argument in this book is that Iran is a state of mind, systematically set to contradict itself” (6). In general, Dabashi is rather suspicious of interpretations and definitions of Iran that originate from the outside, i.e. the West. Even if a learned Western reader may feel irritated, if not offended, by Dabashi’s sometimes severe rebuffs, he should not refrain from reading. Those of “us” (if I may include myself as such a “Western” reader) who read his arguments carefully can benefit a lot from his critical yet wise insights.

In many cases, it seems to me that Dabashi’s grounding in the discipline of Comparative Literature and the application of related concepts greatly contribute to the quality of his historical considerations. He does not accept the simple dichotomy “tradition *vs* modernity” but, following postcolonial thought, separates clearly and dialectically between “colonial modernity” and “anticolonial modernity.” In the book’s postscript, he offers a detailed, convincing explanation of what he means with this label.

In the introduction to this review, I called this book “great.” It goes without saying that the reader may take issue with or even reject some of the almost endless factual details and intellectual and philosophical lines of argument.

Nevertheless, this is a book rich in wisdom and emotion, in polemics, deep insights, and analyses—a book every student of Iranian Studies and related fields should read carefully and digest. To enhance academic debates and discussions, I hope it will be translated as soon as possible into Persian and other Western languages, amongst them German and Russian.

I have to thank Hamid Dabhashi for *Iran—A People Interrupted*. It is without any doubt my very personal “Book of the Year 2008.”

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Negotiating for the Past: Archaeology, Nationalism, and Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1919–1941, James F. Goode, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007, ISBN 978-0-292-71498-4, xii+293 pp.

Having lived long periods of time in Iran, Turkey, and Egypt, James Goode has undertaken a study of the history of archaeology between the two world wars in the three above-mentioned countries as well as in Iraq. *Negotiating for the Past* starts with a preface in which the author explains how he became interested in the topic and how he conducted his research. The introduction outlines the importance of the principal theme of his book and details its key questions and problems. The first three parts of this text are dedicated to archaeology in Turkey after the Ottoman Empire, with a short glance at Palestine and Syria. Parts four and five analyze the link between archaeology and nationalism in Egypt. The next three parts are dedicated to Iran. Parts nine and ten present the history of archaeology in Iraq. The book concludes with a general reflection on the relationship between archaeology and diplomacy in the above-mentioned countries, with a look at the present state of each one.

Based on American, British, German, French, Iranian, Turkish, and Egyptian archives, Goode's book is a comparative study of the relationship between nationalism and archaeological work carried out by Western powers in the Middle East. This review examines parts eight and nine, written on Iran.

Goode examines French archaeology in Iran starting with the August 1900 monopoly granted to France in the wake of Mozaffar al-Din Shah's visit to France. He has chosen this as a major event in the history of archaeology in Iran. However, to better show the relationship between nationalism, archaeology, and diplomacy, he should have started by the first Franco-Persian archaeological convention signed, in 1884, by Naser al-Din Shah, a king fascinated by art and archaeology.¹¹

¹¹Nader Nasiri-Moghaddam, *L'archéologie française en Perse et les antiquités nationales (1884–1914)* (Paris, 2004).

This agreement allowed the couple Dieulafoy to travel to Iran in 1884 and to officially lead the first French archaeological mission at Susa. The mission ended in 1886 because it violated the agreement by sending all antiquities excavated to Paris rather than sharing them equally with Iran.¹² In consequence, French excavations in Susa were interrupted for ten years. When in 1895, the two states signed a second archaeological convention, a new archaeological mission, headed by Jacques de Morgan, was sent to Iran in place of the Dieulafoy mission. De Morgan arrived in 1897, a year after the assassination of Naser al-Din Shah. During his reception by the new monarch, Mozaffar al-Din Shah, he received a firman ratifying the second Franco-Iranian agreement of 1895. However, to make the French Minister of Education believe that the archaeological concession accorded to France would henceforth be perpetual, de Morgan sent a wrong translation of the royal firman to Paris. Then, breaching the terms of the agreement, he stored the objects excavated during the first three campaigns in Susa (1897–1900) in a castle constructed to this end and awaited the right moment to transfer them all to Paris. That moment arrived on 11 August 1900, when Mozaffar al-Din Shah, traveling in France, signed the third Franco-Iranian archaeological agreement a few hours before leaving Paris, without receiving any money in return. This agreement gave the French delegation in Susiane carte blanche. From now on, it was allowed to bring to France all objects it had excavated and to pay the Iranian government the price of the objects in gold or silver. And thus, in 1901, de Morgan sent to the Louvre all archaeological objects excavated in Susa since 1897; the new convention was not retroactive, and these collections should have been shared according to the 1895 agreement.

It is obvious that Goode does not treat the aforementioned details about the history of French archaeology in Iran before the excavation monopoly: his book focuses on the years 1919–41. However, knowledge of that background is necessary for an analysis of the reactions of Iranian nationalists to the monopoly after the 1906 Constitutional Revolution. In fact, as Goode mentions briefly, the French archaeological privilege was increasingly threatened after that revolution, due to a surge of national pride which, fanned by German intrigues, claimed “Iran for the Iranians.” The constitutionalists accused the French delegation limiting its excavations to one region only, Susiane, where all the excavated objects belonged to the French government. In consequence, according to them, Iran had not profited as much as France from the archaeological objects excavated by the delegation.

The Iranian nationalists’ critiques did not have any direct effect on the French archaeological excavations in Iran; Jacques de Morgan’s resignation, in October 1912, and the termination of the mission had other reasons. Nonetheless, shortly thereafter, the French Minister of Education sent various missions to Iran to

¹²Jane Dieulafoy, “A Suse 1884–1886 Journal des fouilles,” *Le Tour du Monde*, 1^{er} semestre, LV (1888), 80.

explore, separately, different archaeological sites in all four corners of Iran and to maintain the French monopoly. However, the outbreak of World War I nipped this mission in the bud.

As Goode shows, after World War I, the French archaeological monopoly was increasingly threatened, and the rise of Reza Shah accelerated the abolition of the French concession. Goode also highlights the role played by the American and German rivals of the French, such as Arthur Upham Pope and Ernst Herzfeld. The negotiations for the abrogation of the concession started in 1927; Goode shows how, in a sense, the French ultimately had the upper hand in the negotiations. While accepting the termination of the monopoly, France retained the right to conduct excavations in Susiane, that is, the traditional focal point of French archaeological exploration. However, the previous French right to keep all objects was amended; now, it had to share them with Iran. In exchange for this new deal, the Iranian government accepted a French specialist chosen by the French government. He was put in charge, for twenty years, of the general directorship of antiquities as well as of a National Library and an archaeological museum to be constructed by him.

Thus, from 1928 to 1960, André Godard directed the Iranian patrimony. In the eighth and ninth parts of his book, Goode examines the domination of American archaeology in Iran and analyzes Godard's difficulties with Herzfeld and Schmidt. Both originally German, these two archaeologists conducted the excavations in Persepolis for the Americans. In fact, as Goode shows, archaeology in interwar Iran was dominated by these two figures. In these two chapters, he relies particularly on American archives, and thus provides the reader with interesting information about the relationship between Murray, Breasted, Pope, Herzfeld, Schmidt, and the Iranian authorities. However, he overlooks the importance of Iranian archaeological institutions and of laws passed during that period to protect the Iranian patrimony. His analysis of the relationship between nationalism, diplomacy, and archaeology would have been strengthened if he had taken this aspect into consideration. In this context, it is noteworthy that in his chapter concerning Turkey, Goode does much more to demonstrate the efforts of the Turkish government to protect its country's patrimony.

Before concluding this review, instead of a general reflection on the book, one has to underline that Goode's work gives clear answers to the questions regarding the relationship between archaeology, nationalism, and diplomacy in the four countries examined. Throughout the book, the author shows how, in the interwar period, foreign archaeologists and their institutions negotiated with Turkish, Iraqi, Egyptian, and Iranian authorities to engage in excavations in all these four countries that were home to prosperous civilizations in the Middle East. Equally, he highlights the role of nationalists in these negotiations; they were keen on discovering their countries' history and, at the same time, to preserve their patrimony. Under these circumstances, French archaeologists established in Egypt a genuine archaeological school or institution, while in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq, it was the local nationalists who tried to preserve their patrimony at all costs.

In this perspective, comparing the different parts of Goode's book, one may perhaps argue that the competition between great powers like France, Germany, Britain, and the USA to lay their hands on Turkish, Iranian, or Mesopotamian antiquities was indirectly to the advantage of the nationalists of these countries and their wish to protect their own archaeological sites. In sum, despite certain lacunae (including in the bibliography),¹³ *Negotiating for the Past*, written in an elegant and attractive style, is a highly commendable book.

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¹³These include Nicole Chevalier, *La recherche archéologique française au Moyen Orient (1842–1947)* (Paris, 2002); Nicole Chevalier, ed., *Une mission en Perse* (Paris, 1997); Ève Gran-Aymérich, *Naissance de l'archéologie moderne 1798–1945* (Paris, 1997); Ann C. Gunter and Stefan R. Hauser, eds., *Ernst Herzfeld and the Development of Near Eastern Studies: 1900–1950* (Leiden, 2005).